

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 02486 081453Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----081454Z 086596 /46

R 081305Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7952
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 4717
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T KUWAIT 2486

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, KU, UR, UK
SUBJECT: BRITISH AMBASSADOR CAUTIONS KUWAITIS RE SOVIET
MISSILE INVOLVEMENT

REF: KUWAIT 2391

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR LAMB INFORMED ME MAY 8 THAT HE HAD
HAD OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT MY DEMARCHE TO GOK RE SOVIET
MISSILE PURCHASE WHEN HE MET MAY 7 WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND INFORMATION MINISTER SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI. PURPOSE OF
MEETING HAD BEEN TO ASCERTAIN REASONS FOR RECENT GOK BAN
OF FINANCIAL TIMES (SEE SEPTTEL), BUT JABER AL-ALI USED
OCCASION TO TELL LAMB OF MY RECENT CONVERSATION WITH HIM ON
SOVIET MISSILE QUESTION (REFTEL).

2. SHAIKH JABER AL-ALI INFORMED AMBASSADOR LAMB THAT GOK
MISSILE PURCHASE WAS RESPONSIVE TO KUWAITI DESIRE TO APPEAR
EVEN-HANDED IN ITS DEALINGS WITH MAJOR POWERS. IN ANY EVENT,
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HE ASSURED LAMB THAT BRITISH LIAISON TEAM AND U.S. MILITARY
ADVISORS WOULD, IN EFFECT, CONTROL KUWAITI DISPOSITION OF
MISSILES, SO THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO CONCERN ABOUT THEIR
DEPLOYMENT.

3. LAMB SAID HE EXPLAINED TO JABER AL-ALI THAT, AS
HE UNDERSTOOD IT, US CONCERN RE THIS PURCHASE WAS POLITICAL

RATHER THAN MILITARY. HE CAUTIONED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER THAT DANGER LAY IN PROVIDING FURTHER OPPORTUNITY THROUGH THIS WEAPONS ACQUISITION FOR SOVIETS TO EXTEND INFLUENCE INTO KUWAIT AND REST OF GULF.

4. LAMB SAID THAT HE DID NOT PURSUE QUESTION OF SOVIET ADVISORS WITH JABER AL-ALI, ALTHOUGH HE WAS AWARE OF REPORTS THAT SOME SOVIET TECHNICIANS WOULD COME TO KUWAIT FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD, ALLEGEDLY TO ASSEMBLE WEAPONS.

5. BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAD ALSO LEARNED IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH GOK DEFENSE MINISTER THAT FIRST SHIPMENT OF SOVIET MISSILES WOULD ARRIVE IN JULY WITH REMAINDER TO FOLLOW AT LATER DATE. THIS DELIVERY DATE IS GOOD DEAL EARLIER THAN KUWAITIS HAD ANTICIPATED.

6. COMMENT: EARLIER REPORTING HAD SUGGESTED THAT SOVIET MISSILES WOULD NOT BE DELIVERED FOR A YEAR OR SO. SOVIETS HAVE OBVIOUSLY LOST LITTLE TIME IN SEEKING TO GET MILITARY FOOT INTO KUWAITI, AND HOPEFULLY, GULF DOOR. AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, GOK SEEMS RECONCILED TO ACCEPTING SOVIET TECHNICIANS, WHO I SUSPECT WILL MANAGE TO PROLONG THEIR STAY BEYOND ANY SPECIFIC TIME LIMIT SET. FACT THAT JABER AL-ALI RAISED THIS MATTER WITH BRITISH AMBASSADOR, WHO CAME TO SEE HIM JUST BEFORE HE WAS TO ATTEND COUNCIL OF MINISTER'S MEETING, SUGGESTS THAT THIS QUESTION WAS VERY MUCH ON HIS MIND AND MIGHT HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR DISCUSSION AT CABINET MEETING. DESPITE DISCUSSIONS I HAVE HAD WITH DEFENSE MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND
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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ON THIS SUBJECT, AS WELL AS BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S MEETING REPORTED ABOVE, MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THE KUWAITIS STILL DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF STEP THEY HAVE TAKEN TO ACQUIRE SOVIET MISSILES, NOR THE FULL RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS DECISION. ALTHOUGH THEY SEEM TO FEEL CONFIDENT THAT IRAQIS COULD NOT OBJECT TO THEIR ACQUIRING SAME MISSILES AS IN IRAQI ARSENAL, I HAVE JUST RECENTLY LEARNED FROM YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR THAT IRAQIS WERE REPORTED TO HAVE VIGOROUSLY PROTESTED TO THE SOVIETS ABOUT SALE TO KUWAIT.
MAESTRONE

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NNN

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